

Daily Eagle

Brighton pier: adventures of "Ladies and Gentlemen" riding cards, 50 while you wait, one still at it.

Lady Charlotte read: "Mr. Isaac Hart," and under the name was written in pencil: "From Mr. Abraham Levi."

"Tell him I am engaged and cannot see him, but will write and make an appointment."

"He says he won't stir until he has seen your ladyship."

"You can show him into the study; I will see him there," Lady Charlotte tied the ribbon of her embroidered morning gown angrily. "These people will drive me mad," she muttered, "and it is my own doing. That is the dreadful part of it."

Lady Charlotte Cradock looked very firm and resolute as she opened the door of the study. Mr. Isaac Hart stood by the window; a remarkably early crumpled hat perched sideways on his oily, raven ringlets; a large diamond ring garnished the little finger of a hand not conspicuous for cleanliness; the brilliant pink scarf round his throat was fastened through a large jeweled brooch in front; the tout ensemble, indeed, was not engaging. He turned round without taking off his hat, and with insolent familiarity greeted Lady Charlotte.

"Good morning, Lady Charlotte. Fine grounds, these of Potts?"

"I have no time to waste, Mr. Isaac Hart," Lady Charlotte read the name on the card before throwing it into a waste paper basket. "Hart; please give me any message your employer may have intrusted to you."

"My employer, as you call him, gave me this little bill, which fell due the day before yesterday, and as your ladyship did not condescend to answer his little note, or to let 'my employer' know when you were going to pay him the monthly installment as is due, why I've come on my employer's behalf to collect that sum."

"You may tell Mr. Levi that I am quite unable to pay at present, he must wait if he ever hopes to receive payment in full. He can make me bankrupt if he likes, and then he will get nothing; but as the interest he charges is rather more usurious than even the worst of his tribe's, I don't suppose he will care to see the exact amount in print. I am sorry I cannot pay this month, but it will be more to Mr. Levi's interest to leave me in peace."

"Mr. Levi can judge for himself what is to his own interest, and he says he must have the money as is owing to him. So if your ladyship really don't want to waste time, you had better just hand over the money and take this here stamped acknowledgment."

Lady Charlotte had taken a seat near the table, and, as yesterday, had drawn the ornamental inlaid pistol case towards her. She took out one of the weapons gingerly and carefully, as one unacquainted with the mysterious ways of firearms; she sat for a few moments with the pistol in her hand, the muzzle towards herself, and looked at it absently without speaking.

The Israelite soon showed signs of impatience.

"I think as you said you don't want to waste no time, Lady Charlotte, I don't neither. Are you going to give me that money?"

"No; it is not in my power to do so. You may tell Mr. Levi that when I can pay I will."

"But Mr. Levi told me to stay here until you did pay."

"Your staying here would do no good to Mr. Levi. If he will accept payment when convenient, all well and good; if not, the bankruptcy court is open to me. Your remaining here is an impertinence which will do Mr. Levi no good, and if I complain to Mr. Potts of your intrusion his servants will turn you out. You will be so good, therefore, as to leave the house at once."

"I don't leave the house without the money. Your ladyship must have lots of swell friends here who would lend you the money. Surely you know of some one who would settle this little business for you."

"I know of no one," said Lady Charlotte with a weary air. She looked at the pistol turned towards her breast. Perhaps it was loaded! Surely if it were it would be better just to raise it to her temples and with one little jerk end this miserable sordid struggle, this endless vexation about money, money, money!

She hated the word. If only she had been rich in her own right! She had never been wicked or done anything really wrong, and yet life was rapidly becoming living torture, and all because of the miserable lack of money. Ah! what had she done that she should be made so miserable?

"I think your ladyship must know a friend who could help you in this little difficulty," the oily, nasal accents of the Israelite broke in upon Lady Charlotte's meditations. "I have heard it said that it's well known who really is the boss of Reminichal Abbey. Don't you think as Mr. Potts would settle this little matter? I have heard it said as there's more than friendship betwixt 'em?"

There was something so revoltingly insolent in the man's look and manner that his meaning flashed across Lady Charlotte's mind long ere the effect of his mere words could have done. Her face, which had been pale before, grew paler; she leapt out of her seat, pointed the revolver full at the man, and before she could fully realize the situation, she felt her hand violently jerked upwards, there was a flash, smoke, a report and a dull thud as Mr. Isaac Hart fell to the ground.

Only for a moment did Lady Charlotte lose her presence of mind. The pistol dropped from her hand, she felt sick and giddy, but a gentle gust of summer air blowing in through the lace curtains revived her. She looked down at the man lying on the floor face upwards. "Good God! I have committed murder!" she cried, and rushed to the door and looked it. Then she knelt beside the man and fanned him with some papers from the table, but there was no sign of life. Looking round, she caught sight of some roses in a valuable crackle jar on the mantelpiece; she threw the roses out and poured some water over the forehead and behind the ears, as she remembered people had done to her when she fainted. Presently the man stirred ever so slightly and opened his eyes. "Thank heaven!" she thought, "he is alive at least. If he dies I have committed murder, but there shall be a little excitement as possible," Lady Charlotte unlocked the door and looked it again on the outside, and ran until she reached the hall. There she met a footman carrying a breakfast tray.

"Where is my master?" she said, endeavoring to conceal her agitation, though she feared the loud beating of her heart must betray her.

"He is in his room, my lady."

"Then show me the way to his room at once. Put your tray down anywhere. I must go to him at once."

The footman started at Lady Charlotte in speechless surprise.

"My master never sees any one except his secretary before he comes down to breakfast, my lady."

"Never mind, I must see him at once," Lady Charlotte could with difficulty preserve her composure. That man in the study might be dying while she was parleying with the footman. She took a slender gold bracelet from her wrist.

"There, you may have that to give to your young woman; and now show me the way at once. I am in a great hurry."

The man put down his tray and bounded up stairs. Lady Charlotte ran after him. The footman stopped and pointed to a door hung with heavy folds of drapery.

"That is the sitting room Mr. Potts occupies."

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"The groom who went for the doctor did not find him at home, he had to drive on to Maidenhead to find another, so there has been delay in getting assistance. Mr. Hart has been conscious some time and has taken brandy which we poured down his throat. I will let you know in the course of the afternoon how matters progress. It will be better if you are seen everywhere in the ground during the afternoon and evening. Your maid tells me that no one heard the report of the pistol except herself; the heavy portieres must have deadened the sound."

With a little rouge Lady Charlotte concealed the deadly pallor, which she felt must otherwise attract universal attention. She asked the same maid servant who had brought her the note to bring her some brandy, and, after swallowing what seemed to be an enormous quantity, she summoned up all her courage to leave her room and join the crowd down stairs.

Everything had been so well prepared beforehand that nothing was left to be arranged on the last day. A blazing July sun poured down on the grounds of Reminichal Abbey, and the little glen arranged for the performance was the only shady nook within the cultivated part of the grounds immediately surrounding the house.

Towards 2 the carriages belonging to that part of the audience who had paid for their seats began to arrive. Rich city men, with their wives and daughters in ultra fashionable bonnets and dresses, wives of doctors who had already reached that high footing on the medical ladder exemplified by residence in Harley street, but not that proud eminence which means appearing in print among the favored few who sign the daily bulletins of the illnesses of great ones; wives of barristers and many others who lived to see a dull play without the faintest spark of interest poorly performed by an absolutely inefficient though eminently aristocratic corps dramatique. These gathered in great force. They peered into everything, anxious to discover how the new millionaire did things. The daughters took mental notes of the housemaids' and ladies' maids' caps and aprons, and secretly resolved to confect their own handmaiden for "ma's next party." The men thought the ribbon bordering poor and not equal to that in their own gardens at Norwood and Sydenham. The taxicabs, in the main, employed themselves in speculating as to how much the whole thing had cost to get up, and many came to the conclusion that the ices and refreshments alone, which were gratis, must have swamped the takings, so of course the charity must go to the wall. That really was of no consequence. Nobody even knew where the church was, or cared, except a few local magnates, and they were bidden to the feast and performance free of expense.

The exhumed pastoral Elizabethan drama in its new dress progressed rapidly. The amateur artists had not acquired the art of hiding out the sentences slowly as though they were loath to part with a line of their parts, after the fashion of the modern psychological dramatic school; and, either from a nervous longing to get to the end and hide themselves, or from a desire to say it all before they forgot it, the piece played very rapidly.

Lady Charlotte got through her part not brilliantly, but no worse than the rest, though she felt that a lifetime's agony was compressed into the three hours occupied by the play and enticements. Towards the end of the last act, when she had grown accustomed to the appearance of the audience and had the hardihood to look it in the face and recognize individuals, her eyes suddenly fell upon the owner of Reminichal Abbey. He was sitting on a seat at the end of the front row, the end nearest the Abbey. The hero of the play was indulging in a long meandering soliloquy during which at rehearsals Lady Charlotte had been coached to occupy herself with elaborate stage business, but she had forgotten all her coaching. She felt her eyes fixed on Mr. Potts. A servant in gorgeous livery, with much mysterious and apparently meaningless gold ornamentation dropping from one shoulder, came rapidly towards his master. The servant bent down with that remarkable air of blended mystery and respect peculiar to the well-mannered footman and murmured what seemed to Lady Charlotte a long communication. Mr. Washington Potts looked serious and said a few words to the servant, and stood up and moved a few steps in the direction of the house.

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